



# Tip Sheet

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Kay Williams, [kay.williams@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:kay.williams@ttuhsc.edu)  
(806) 781-8408

### Summer Safety Tips

#### *TTUHSC Expert Discusses Typical Seasonal Spike in Traumatic Injuries*

Students are out of school for the summer. Workers are off on vacation. Brian Kendall, M.D., Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) assistant professor of Emergency Medicine, said it's no coincidence that serious trauma and injury cases usually spike during the season that most of us associate with rest and recreation.

"We're all out playing and having a lot of fun," Kendall said. "We go on vacations; a lot of people are on the roadways driving. It's warm enough now to go to places like the pool. We can get out those vehicles, whether it be an ATV or a golf cart or motorcycle, bicycles or scooters. And because of the nature of those activities, inevitably there are going to be injuries. But there are things that we can do to help prevent those injuries from being serious."

The most frequent trauma cases in the summer are from motorized vehicle or bicycle accidents, near drownings or drownings, and heat-related injuries, Kendall said.

Kendall shared these insights:

#### Vehicle/bicycle safety

- "I have seen multiple times where parents have saved their children's lives by forcing them to wear a helmet prior to them going out and riding their bike. And those kids come in after being struck by a car or after hitting a curb and flying over the handlebars. Their helmet is completely destroyed, but there's not a scratch on their head. And the kids are just fine. They get to go home. I've also seen the exact opposite, too and it's devastating."
- "When it comes to ATVs or dirt bikes, those are typically not made for children. It's still very important that those are always being operated under adult supervision. You don't want to deal with the consequences of having an accident in one of those vehicles because they are heavy enough, even if you are wearing a helmet. They can still land on you and cause other internal injuries which can also be devastating."

#### Water/pool safety

- "Scene safety is always the most important. If you have a home pool, make sure that you have security apparatuses in place to keep your children, your pets and other people safe in that

environment. Have a pool cover that's rated to be able to be fallen onto and it won't sink down into the pool."

- "Most of the time, people have no idea that somebody is drowning until it's too late. Even if they're great swimmers, you can still have things happen where somebody may lose the ability to keep their head above water, and they need life-saving intervention."
- "If your child doesn't know how to swim or isn't the best swimmer, then making sure that they're always wearing either a lifejacket or another approved flotation device is imperative. Then get them into swim lessons of some sort."

#### Heat safety

- "There are many stories where they'll put a thermometer in the car, and within minutes the temperature in that car is over 120 degrees Fahrenheit, which is more than enough to start causing some significant issues with someone's body. It could be 90 degrees and your body could start to overheat."
- "Heat exhaustion is typically where maybe we stop sweating, or we start to feel a little bit lightheaded or feeling like we're going to pass out or just feeling extremely hot. If you start noticing somebody with signs of heatstroke such as confusion, delirium, or hallucinations, if they start having seizure activity, if they stop being able to move one side of their body or can't walk—those are all life-threatening emergencies. Call 9-1-1."
- "If all you're doing is drinking alcohol, then you will become more dehydrated. That can lead to you being more at risk of developing heat exhaustion, heat stroke or at risk of developing symptoms of dehydration and severe dehydration with issues surrounding your cardiac or heart function, kidney function and brain function. It's very important to stay well-hydrated when you're out in the heat."

#### Fireworks

- Kendall said each year in the emergency room he sees significant hand and facial injuries, particularly to people who lit fireworks which were altered or who used fireworks improperly.
- "When you burn your hand, that can lead to scar tissue. That can lead to difficulty in mobility of your hand. You can also lose your fingers, ears, nose and eyes. You can have significant facial burns, which can lead to difficulty breathing. Those things are very serious."

Kendall said while simple decisions such as wearing a bike helmet, closely supervising all pool activities and not leaving a young child or elderly person in your parked car for any length of time can sometimes be inconvenient, they're always the right choice. "These are the correct things to do, and by doing them, you could save a life," Kendall said.